



Church in Regina Newsletter

Meeting Place: 3860 Buckingham Drive E, Regina, SK, Canada S4V 3A1

Psalm 99:6, "Moses and Aaron..., And Samuel among those who called on His name - They called out to Jehovah, And He answered them."

Church Address:

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Contact Numbers:

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Meeting Schedule:

Lord's Table Meeting

Lord's Day
10:00AM to 12:00PM

Prayer Meeting

Tuesdays & Wednesdays
Saints Homes
8:00PM to 9:00PM

YP Meeting

Fridays
7:00PM to 9:00PM
Brother Hedrick's Place

Small/Home Meeting

Friday Evening
Saint's Home

Seven Annual Feasts

1. International Chinese-speaking Conference, Anaheim, CA: February 17-19, 2017
2. International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones (Spring) Anaheim, CA, USA: Mar 31 to Apr. 2, 2017
3. Memorial Day Conference New York, NY: May 26-29, 2017
4. Summer Training Anaheim, CA: July 3-8, 2017
5. International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones (Fall) Leipzig, Germany: October 5-7, 2017
6. Thanksgiving Conference Phoenix AZ: November 23-26, 2017

KEEPING A TIME TO READ THE BIBLE DAILY

... In our daily living we should have a time to read the Bible. We should not consider reading the Bible as a pastime or think that other things are more important. Reading the Bible is indispensable and cannot be put aside. We must keep the time to read our Bible. There are letters that I have yet to reply to because I must spend time to read the Bible. I cannot put my Bible aside simply to reply to these letters. If our Bible reading is always being interrupted for various reasons, sooner or later we will discover that we have suffered a great loss. This is true especially for those who minister the word. **If they do not spend an adequate amount of time to read the Bible, they should not expect their speaking to be rich and strong.**

When we read Paul's Epistles, we sense that he was well versed in the Old Testament; hence, he was able to quote it skillfully and with ease. This is not our condition; hence, our messages are poor. Sometimes we do not have anything to say because we do not have a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Sometimes we see situations in the church, but we do not have the words to meet the need; we are not able to cause the saints to be open and vital. If our Bible reading is thorough, we will not only be able to meet every need; we will also be able to bring vitality to the church life through the enlightenment and revelation that we receive from the Bible.

We must always use our spirit to contact the Spirit. As we learn the meanings of words in the Bible and study the allegories, deal with our heart, our mind, and our emotion, and receive some training, we will touch the Lord whenever we read the Bible. When we read the Lord's Word, using our spirit to contact the Spirit, we will be fed and satisfied; we will be inwardly watered and refreshed. Moreover, we will have the ability to experience this any time of the day.

When we use our spirit to contact the Spirit, we will gain a deeper understanding of the Bible. We will touch the desire of God's heart and receive fresh revelations. Reading the Bible by studying it and using the Bible to touch the Spirit are interdependent and support each other. If we consistently practice to study the Bible and to touch the Spirit in the Bible, we will gain a substantial understanding of the Bible. We will discover that the sections we never understood will become clear to us. We will be skilled in reading the Bible, and our mind will be trained to understand the sense in our spirit. Thus, the Bible will be an open book to us.

Not only so, the Bible will be a living book. We are not superstitious, but we will be able to say that whenever we contact the Bible, we touch God. Furthermore, we will not touch God in a superficial way; we will touch the desire of God's heart as well as His thoughts. He will open Himself to us through His words. This is the way to be persons who know the Bible and who receive the benefit of the Bible. (*The Sufficiency, Pursuit, and Learning of the Lord's Serving Ones, Chapter 9, Section 5*)

READING THE BIBLE BEING SIMPLE

Our concept concerning reading the Bible needs to be simplified. We should not consider that it is difficult to read the Bible. Many people think that the Bible is a difficult book. They think that since the Bible is the canon of the Christian religion, they can never understand the Bible. This concept frustrates our ability to understand the Bible. However, we must consider that **reading the Bible is as simple as eating**. We all admit that eating is a simple matter. It is not easy to cook a meal, but it is very easy to eat the meal. This also applies to reading the Bible. God does not want us to write the Bible; He wants us to read the Bible. We do not need to invent anything or to investigate. Strictly speaking, **when we come to the Bible, we come to the presence of God to be fed by God**. Hence, we must first consider that reading the Bible is a simple matter.

This consideration, however, does not mean that we do not need to read the Bible. No one can say that because eating is easy, he does not need to eat. Instead, this consideration should encourage everyone to eat.

Saying that it is simple to read the Bible does not mean that it is easy to understand it. Even if I read the Bible for another six thousand years, I will not fully understand it. No one can fully comprehend the Bible. The more one reads it, the more he feels he does not understand it. Thirty years ago I thought that I understood one book of the Bible, but today I can say that I do not truly understand any book of the Bible. The Bible is very rich, and no one can fully understand it. Although it is simple to read the Bible, **it is difficult to fully understand the Bible**; nevertheless, **it is very easy to receive food from the Bible**. No matter which chapter and which verse we read, we can find rich food and be filled because the Bible is full of nutrition.

My burden is first to help us accept that reading the Bible is a simple matter. We thank God that the Bible has been written and is in our hands. It is very easy for us to obtain food from the Bible. We do not even need much education to be fed with the Bible. We can be fed even if we do not recognize one hundred percent of the words in the Bible. Reading The Bible is a simple matter.

Upcoming Activities:

- ▶ March 19, 2017 - YP conference
- ▶ March 10 & 24, 2017 - UofR Campus Work
- ▶ March 24 - 26, 2017 - YP Conference in Calgary
- ▶ March 26, 2017 - Brother's Meeting

PRAYER BURDEN

“But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.”

1. Lord, as Your spouse, we absolutely **abandon** the “**great tree**” the apostate church that has married to the world. We have **come out** of her and **separated** unto You to be the church, Your golden lampstand having nothing to do with worldliness, idolatry and no ground for Satan.
2. Lord, we, as the church that has been called out of the world to be Your **pure expression**, we declare “*that, in us the ruler of the world has nothing*”. Make us **men of prayer** who are one with You, who live in Your presence continuously and trusting only in You.
3. Lord, we **fight** against the worldly church and be the “**Antipas**” of today. We **holdfast** Your name, which is the reality of Your person, and we do **not deny** Your faith. Make us Your living witnesses, who bear Your testimony, who love You and stand with You against “**mammon**”.
4. Lord, preserve us from the “**teaching of Balaam**” not to be distracted in our **enjoyment** of You, and from the “**teaching of the Nicolaitan**” which destroy our **functioning** in the Body.
5. Lord, we only desire to **eat** You as the hidden manna, as the tree of life, and as the rich produce of the good land that we maybe **incorporated** into You; You **in** the Father, we **in** You, You **in** us, and even the Spirit of reality **in** us.
6. Please pray that many saints will rise up to cooperate with the Lord in His present move to gain the entire **Europe**, starting with **Germany** for His testimony
7. Lord, remember the church in **Regina**: to continue enjoying the Lord that we maybe transformed into a **white stone** for His building.

This Weeks’s Pursuit: Returning to the Orthodoxy of the Church - Message Three

The Church in Pergamos
 Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:12-17

I. In Greek Pergamos means “marriage,” implying union, and “fortified tower”—Rev. 2:12:
 A. As a sign, the church in Pergamos prefigures the church that entered into a marriage union with the world and became a high fortified tower; these two meanings correspond to two of the parables in Matthew 13—the parable of the great tree and the parable of the leaven. The great tree is the equivalent of the high tower, and the woman with the leaven is the equivalent of the apostate church, which has married the world. In the eyes of God, degraded Christendom is an evil woman who has mixed worldly, demonic, pagan, and devilish things with the good things of Christ to produce an abominable mixture. We must absolutely come out of this evil system and be separated to God, returning to the orthodoxy of the church so that the church can be a golden lampstand, having nothing to do with worldliness, idolatry, or Satan’s saturation.

When we are attacked and are undergoing persecution, we should not be discouraged, for that is a strong sign that we are on the right track and that we have not been distracted from following the Lord’s steps. Satan will not allow us to have a good name unless we enter into union with him. “The history among us has been one of **completely coming out of Christianity without compromise.**”

In Revelation 2:13a the Lord said of the church in Pergamos, “*I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is*”; Satan’s throne is in the world, the place where he dwells and the sphere of his reign; since the worldly church entered into union with the world, she dwells where Satan dwells. Instead of dwelling where Satan dwells, we need to dwell in our spirit and in Christ, the One in whom Satan, the ruler of the world, has nothing (no ground, no chance, no hope, and no possibility in anything).

Since the church is a spouse to Christ as a chaste bride, her union with the world is considered spiritual fornication in the eyes of God: Satan realized that persecuting the church did not work very well; therefore, being the subtle one, he changed his strategy from persecuting the church to welcoming her; this welcoming of the church by the Roman Empire ruined her, because it caused the church to become worldly. Worldly things are related to idol worship, for worldliness is always associated with idolatry; an idol in our heart is anything within us that we love more than the Lord and that replaces the Lord in our life. Mammon also stands in opposition to God; many idols exist only because of mammon; “*you cannot serve God and mammon*”. The church must be a golden lampstand, the pure expression of the Triune God, and must have no connections with the world, but after the Roman Empire had made the church a worldly religion, she became altogether impure, worldly, and idolatrous.

In His epistle to Pergamos the Lord referred to “*Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells*”. This faithful witness stood against all that the worldly church brought in and practiced; hence, he became a martyr of the Lord; to testify against the worldly church we need the spirit of martyrdom: **Witnesses are martyrs, those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life.** We can be martyrs for the Lord physically, psychologically, or spiritually. In Greek the word for *martyr* is the same as that for *witness*; Antipas, as a faithful witness, bore an anti-testimony, a testimony against anything that deviated from the testimony of Jesus. It must have been through his anti-testimony that in his days the church in Pergamos still held fast the Lord’s name and did not deny the proper Christian faith.

II. The worldly and degraded church holds not only the teaching of Balaam but also the teaching of the Nicolaitans—vv. 14-15:

Balaam was a Gentile prophet who for wages enticed God’s people into fornication and idolatry; in the worldly church some began to teach such things; idolatry always brings in fornication; when the worldly church disregarded the name, the person, of the Lord, she turned to idolatry, which issues in fornication. The error of Balaam is the error of teaching wrong doctrine for reward, while knowing it to be contrary to the truth and against the people of God, and abusively using the influence of certain gifts to lead the people of God astray from the pure worship of the Lord to idolatrous worship; coveting for reward will cause the coveting ones to rush headlong into the error of Balaam.

The teaching of Balaam **distracts** believers from the person of Christ to idolatry and from the enjoyment of Christ to spiritual fornication, whereas the teaching of the Nicolaitans **destroys** the function of the believers as members of the Body of Christ; the former teaching **disregards the Head**, and the latter **destroys the Body**; this is the subtle intention of the enemy in all religious teachings. First, the Nicolaitans practiced the hierarchy in the initial church; then they taught it in the degraded church; today, in both Catholicism and Protestantism, this Nicolaitan hierarchy prevails in both practice and teaching.

WEEK	LORD’S TABLE MEETING	PRAYER MEETING	YP MEETING	HOME MEETING	OFFERING
March 5 - March 11, 2017	21	12	8	11	\$292.00
March 12 - March 18, 2017	18	11	6	13	\$

III. “To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it”—Rev. 2:17:

We need to eat the hidden manna in order to be incorporated into the New Jerusalem as the tabernacle of God. The manna preserved in the golden pot was the center of the tabernacle, God’s dwelling place in the Old Testament; likewise, the Christ whom we have eaten, digested, and assimilated is the center of our being as a part of the church, God’s dwelling place today. Christ as the hidden manna is the center of the tabernacle; the hidden manna is in the golden pot; the golden pot is in the Ark, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold; and this Ark is in the Holy of Holies. Christ the Son as the hidden manna is in God the Father as the golden pot; God the Father is in Christ the Son as the Ark with His two natures, divinity and humanity; and Christ as the indwelling Spirit lives in our regenerated spirit as the reality of the Holy of Holies. The Son is **in** the Father, we are **in** the Son, the Son is **in** us, and we are **in** dwelt by the Spirit of reality; this is the incorporation of the processed God with the regenerated believers. The way to be incorporated into the tabernacle is to eat the hidden manna; the more we eat Christ, the more we are incorporated into the New Jerusalem, the ultimate tabernacle of God, as a universal incorporation. We should not be joined to the world; **we should be incorporated into the New Jerusalem by eating Christ as the hidden manna.**

Enjoying Christ as the hidden manna produces transformation: The Lord promises the overcomer to eat of the hidden manna and to give him a white stone; this indicates that if we eat the hidden manna, we will be transformed into white stones for God’s building. These stones will be justified and approved by the Lord, as indicated by the color white, but the worldly church will be condemned and rejected by Him. God’s building, the building of the church, depends upon our transformation, and our transformation issues from the enjoyment of Christ as our life supply.

Every transformed believer as a white stone bears a new name, which no one knows except him who receives it: Such a new name is the interpretation of the experience of the one being transformed; hence, only he himself knows the meaning of that name. Revelation 2:17 is a word spoken by the Lord to us; we should not take it objectively but as our biography: We can pray, “*Lord, I agree with Your promise. From now on, I shall eat You in a hidden way and be transformed to become a stone for Your building.*” What a wonderful promise this is from the Lord; yes, the church may become worldly, but the Lord has promised that we may become a white stone for God’s building.

“One Life-Study a Day Makes One Holy”

LIFE-STUDY OF EPHESIANS

March 13, 2017, Monday

Message Thirty-Seven

THE BASE OF OUR ONENESS

In exhorting us to safeguard the oneness (4:3), the Apostle Paul points out seven things as the base, the very foundation, of our oneness: **one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father.** These seven ones are of three groups. The first three can be grouped together, the Spirit with the Body as His expression and the Body related to the one hope. This Body, having been regenerated and being saturated with the Spirit as its essence, has the hope of being transfigured into the full likeness of Christ. The next three can also be grouped together, the Lord with faith and baptism, that we may be joined to Him. Then we have one God and Father, who is the Originator and source of all. The Spirit as the Executor of the Body, the Son as the Creator of the Body, and God the Father as the Originator of the Body—all three of the Triune God—are related to the Body. The third of the Trinity is mentioned first because the main concern here is the Body, and the Spirit is the essence of the Body. Then the course is traced back to the Son and then to the Father.

As believers, we are members of the Body of Christ. Although you are a member of the Body, are you satisfied with the way you are? If we are honest, we shall admit that the present situation of both ourselves and the church is less than satisfactory. We need to be transfigured. Within us as members of the Body and within the Body as a whole there is the one Spirit, who is the essence of the Body and the life and life supply of the Body. This Spirit is neither dormant nor idle; on the contrary, He is working energetically within us toward the goal of bringing us into the fulfillment of the hope of our calling. This is why we say that the transfiguration of the body will not be accidental. Today the indwelling Spirit is carrying out both the transfiguration of the body and the manifestation of the sons of God. Because we are in the process of transfiguration and manifestation, the rapture should not come as a surprise. Rather, it should be a normal experience.

The reality of baptism consists in realizing and confessing that our natural being has been crucified and buried. Hence, baptism is the realization of death, burial, and resurrection. Through faith we are joined to Christ, and in Christ we are crucified, buried, and resurrected. Immediately after we believe in Christ, we should be baptized as a testimony of our realization of this fact. Baptism always follows faith. Through baptism, we have a complete and thorough transfer out of Adam and into Christ. Now we are in Christ who is our life and our Lord. No longer are we in Adam with Adam as our head. We are in Christ with Christ as our Head. Because the Lord, faith, and baptism are related in such a way, Paul spoke of them together in verse 5.

Although many of us have been Christians for years, we have never heard that oneness is actually the Triune God becoming our experience. Our oneness is the Triune God—the Spirit, the Lord, and the Father—wrought into the Body. Along with the Triune God, we have the faith, the baptism, and the hope. One day we received faith and were brought into Christ. What a glorious visitation was this coming of faith! After we believed into Christ, we were baptized. We became members of the Body with the hope of glorification. This is our oneness. This oneness is the Triune God wrought into the Body, which comes into existence through faith and baptism and which has the hope of one day being glorified. May we all have the heart to care for this oneness.

March 14, 2017, Tuesday

Message Thirty-Eight

THE GIFTS PERFECTING THE SAINTS

Ephesians 4:7 says, “*But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*” Concerning the Body, all the basic elements are one. This is covered in verses 4 through 6, where we have one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. Although the basic elements of the Body are one, the gifts, or the functions, are many and varied. The word “but” at the beginning of verse 7 brings out this contrast between the oneness of the Body and the variety of the gifts or functions.

Ephesians 4:11 does speak of some apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. Perhaps you are wondering how I can say that all the saints can be such gifts to the Body. The gifts in 4:11 are the leading apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. We, of course, cannot be these leading ones; however, as their followers, we can be the same kind of persons. I certainly do not consider myself an apostle like Paul, who was a leading one. But as a follower of Paul, I do regard myself as one of today's apostles, today's sent ones. We all should have such a concept concerning ourselves. We all should be followers of the leading apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. If we are not such followers, we shall fall into a great heresy—the heresy of a clergy-laity system. We shall make the leading ones the clergy, and the followers will become the laymen. But in the church, the Body of Christ, there is no such thing as either clergy or laity. As gifts to the Body, we all are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. As gifts given by Christ to the Body and to all mankind, we can be a great blessing to the whole world.

Ephesians 4 tells us that grace is given according to the measure, the size, of the gift. The grace produces the gifted persons and then supplies them according to the measure of the gift. All the gifted persons are for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ, until we all arrive at the three items mentioned in verse 13. In a later message we shall consider these items in detail.

March 15, 2017, Wednesday

Message Thirty-Nine

THE BELIEVER'S STANDARD

Every Christian who is up to the **standard** is an apostle, prophet, evangelist, and shepherd and teacher. An apostle is not a king; he is a sent one. If I send you out to do a specific task, then you are my sent one, my apostle. In John 17:18 the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, "*As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*" The "them" in this verse refers not only to the twelve Apostles, but to all the disciples. This indicates that all who believe in Christ should be sent ones. This is confirmed by the Lord's word to the disciples in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." All disciples of the Lord Jesus, both male and female, are to be sent ones. If you have been a Christian for years without ever having been sent by Him, you are not up to the standard. If we consider our past experience, we shall realize that many of us have been sent—to our husband or wife, to our parents and relatives, and to our friends. Like Paul, we are sent ones, we are apostles.

To have a walk worthy of God's calling is to be one who is sent by God, who speaks for God, who preaches the gospel, and who shepherds others and teaches them. If we are not such a person, we are not up to God's standard. Due to the influence of our religious background and environment, we are accustomed to thinking of apostles and prophets as extraordinary people. But an apostle is an ordinary Christian, a Christian who meets God's standard.

We should not have a false humility and say that we are too small, too insignificant, to be apostles and prophets. It is a fact that we can be sent out by the Lord, at least to our relatives and friends, and that we can speak for Him. It is a fact that we all can be and should be God's sent ones. We are of the same category as Paul, although, as apostles, we do not have, of course, as great a measure as he had.

March 16, 2017, Thursday

Message Forty

THE WAY TO REACH THE STANDARD

Firstly, we must all be **stewards**, just as Paul was (3:2). The stewardship is not limited to the leading apostles. Rather, it is universal; that is, it is for all the Lord's disciples. For example, the parable of the steward in Luke 16 was spoken to the disciples. This indicates that every believer, including all of us, must be a steward. I believe that, when Paul spoke of the stewardship in 3:2, he realized within him that the stewardship is for all believers.

Because our stewardship is the stewardship of the grace of God, we need to **receive grace**, even the abundance of grace. Yes, we all can be God's sent ones and God's spokesmen, but in order to fulfill such a function, we must have grace. John 1:16 says, "For of His fullness we all received, and grace upon grace."

In order to reach the standard, we also need to **receive revelation** (3:3, 5). A prophet is one who is full of light, one who sees what others do not see. Those who are in darkness have nothing to say, but those who are in the light have a great deal to speak forth. Whenever we see something by revelation, we automatically have something to talk about. If we would be today's sent ones and prophets, we must receive both grace and revelation.

The way to receive revelation is to **get into the Word**. I believe that Paul received revelation through his study of the Old Testament. Because he spent so much time in the Word, revelation could come to him by means of the Word. The Pharisees, however, could not receive revelation from the Word because they were closed and disobedient. Paul, however, was open. All the veils that covered him were taken away by the Lord. As we come to the Word, we should ask the Lord to remove the veils from our eyes. Although we do not know what veils are still upon us, the Lord knows, and He is willing to remove them. We need to pray, "Lord, I am coming to Your Word. Take away anything that veils my sight, and make Your Word open to me." If we pray in this manner, light will come in, and we shall receive revelation. Then we shall speak to others according to the light we have received from the Lord. Such a speaking, a speaking full of divine light, will greatly surprise the religious ones. Oh, the church people must be full of light, full of revelation!

If we would reach the standard established by the Apostle Paul, our whole being needs to **be strengthened into the inner man**. By being strengthened into the inner man, we shall be rooted and grounded in love and shall become strong to apprehend the dimensions of Christ, to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, and to be filled unto all the fullness of God (3:16-19). Paul was a person with his entire being strengthened into the inner man. Therefore, he was rooted and grounded in love and knew the dimensions of Christ and the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ. What about us? Paul prayed that we would be strengthened into the inner man so that, ultimately, we might be filled unto all the fullness of God.

March 17, 2017, Friday

Message Forty-One

THE WAY TO BE PERFECTED

In order to be perfected, we must pay attention to life and to function. The way to be perfected is to grow in life and to become skillful in function. The Greek word rendered “perfecting” here also means completing, equipping, furnishing. To perfect a saint is to complete him, to equip him, and to furnish him. Only by growing in life can we be completed. Not until we become mature will we be completed. For example, a child of five is not a full-grown person. As long as, spiritually speaking, we remain underage, we shall not be complete. Mothers perfect their children by feeding them. Furthermore, parents equip their children and furnish them by training them to behave and to speak in a certain way. Thus, children are perfected by feeding and by training. The same is true with respect to perfecting the saints according to God’s economy. The saints need to be fed and they need to be trained so that they may function with the proper skill.

We need to be trained for the practice of the church life. This means that the training should enrich and uplift our practice of the church life. Although the help given to the saints thus far is far from adequate, we cannot deny the fact that since coming into the Lord’s recovery many saints have undergone some training. This is evident as we listen to them testify or pray in the meetings. However, the need remains for more thorough and complete training. My burden is that after a period of time, perhaps after three or four years, virtually all the saints in the Lord’s recovery in this country will have been adequately trained.

To be trained is to have the rich supply of Christ ministered to us that we may grow, and it is to be equipped that we may be skillful in speaking, in contacting new ones, in shepherding, and in preaching and teaching. Do not say that you cannot speak because you are not a talented speaker. We all are able to speak for the Lord.

Once the saints have been perfected, then wherever they go, they will be apostles, the ones sent to that place. They will also be prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. To perfect the saints to be such gifts to the Body is the Lord’s way. If we do not follow this way, the Lord will not be able to get what He desires. How we thank Him that, in His mercy, He has shown us His way!

We have seen that in 4:13-15 Paul did not exclude himself. Rather, he said, “*Until we all arrive...that we may be no longer babes...but holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things...*” None of us should think that we have already been perfected. On the contrary, we all need more life supply and more training. If we are willing to grow and to be trained, then we shall not repeat the history of Christianity. If we are faithful to practice what the Lord shows us, the Lord will have a way among us. The Lord’s way has never changed. His way is to perfect the saints to do the work of ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the way for the Lord to gain what He desires as the necessary preparation for His coming back.

March 18, 2017, Saturday

Message Forty-Two

ALL BUILDING MEMBERS WITHOUT RANK

The concept that the church is a social organization has caused a great deal of damage. In social organizations there is the need for certain members to be on the top, to be of the highest rank. In religion this may take the form of hierarchy. But there is no hierarchy in our physical body. No doubt, certain members are above others, but this is a matter of functional order, not of rank. For example, for the purpose of function, the nose is higher than the mouth. It would be absurd to say that the nose has a higher rank than the mouth has. In like manner, our fingers are below both our arms and shoulders. But this does not mean that the fingers have a lower rank. This is entirely a matter of order according to function. How could the fingers function if they were attached to the shoulders? Therefore, in the physical body, a picture of the living organism of the Body of Christ, there is no rank nor hierarchal order, but only order according to function.

As we consider the apostles, prophets, and elders spoken of in the New Testament, we need to drop the natural concept. If we hold to our natural concept, we shall automatically think that the apostles, prophets, and elders have a higher rank. The concept of rank is altogether a natural concept, a concept foreign to the Scriptures. The apostles, prophets, and elders carry out certain functions, but fulfilling these functions does not place them on a level above the other saints. In the Body there are many members, and these members have different functions. Although there is a difference of function, there is no difference of rank. In an organism there is no consciousness of rank. If our shoulders could speak, they would say that they have never thought of having any rank in our body; they would say that they have never regarded themselves as higher than the other members.

Ephesians 4:11 says, “*And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers.*” These gifted ones are not high officials with a special rank. Rather, they are given for the perfecting of the saints (v. 12). The saints need to be perfected, equipped, furnished, unto the work of ministry. This work of ministry is the building up of the Body of Christ. Because so many saints are not yet doing the work of ministry, they need the gifted ones mentioned in verse 11 to perfect them, to equip them, that they may be qualified to carry out the work of ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ. The perfecting or equipping is related both to growth in life and to training in certain skills.

Verse 13 says, “*Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*” Notice that in this verse Paul says “*we,*” not “*you.*” When Paul wrote this verse, he himself was already mature. However, he was waiting for the immature ones to grow up. In other words, he was waiting until we all arrive. Paul did not want to arrive at the destination ahead of the younger ones. Rather, he was waiting until we all arrive at three things: at the oneness of the faith, at a full-grown man, and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In this verse there are three phrases beginning with the word *at*. The fact that there is no conjunction indicates that the second is in apposition to the first and that the third is in apposition to the second. Thus, the three phrases actually refer to one thing.